

So this debate is going to be an interesting one. I think it is going to set the tone for what we do over the next 2 years. Believe me, we will be talking about the millionaires' tax break—who voted for it and who voted against it—not just today and not just tomorrow but over the next 2 years. It is a very important issue and one we cannot let rest for the good of the middle class, for the good of deficit reduction, for the good of the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I listened with great attention to the speech just given by my friend from New York. Senator SCHUMER is right on target when he is talking about: Whom are we fighting for? What are we in the Senate for? What are we here to do? Whom are we fighting for?

I have often said the one thing about the very wealthy in our country, they are pretty good at taking care of themselves. Obviously, they would not be rich if they were not. But what about the people who do not have much? Who is fighting for them? This is what I wish to spend some time talking about; that is, the unemployed in this country.

Last week we went home for Thanksgiving. I hope everyone had a good time with their families. Now we are looking at the upcoming holidays with anticipation, as we do every year, to be with our families, go out and buy some presents and exchange presents—kids, grandkids, a festive time.

But what about all those people who are out of work and have no money, who right now are being cut off from the only lifeline they have, unemployment insurance benefits—losing them day after day because they ended 2 days ago. By the time Christmas rolls around, somewhere close to 2 million Americans not only will be out of a job but will have no source of income whatsoever, facing another winter season celebrating the holidays with nothing.

I had a newspaper headline I showed the other day that said: "Luxury spending is back in fashion"—about how much money was being spent on jewels and fancy wristwatches and high-end types of things. Then, right under, in small print, it said: However, for millions of Americans they are not shopping anywhere because they are out of work.

The two faces of America—is that what we want this country to be, a few who can spend on lavish, jewel-encrusted watches, buying \$2,500 cashmere scarves, as I just read about the other day, and everybody else sort of getting in the soup line? We are a better country than that.

That is what I wanted to talk about: reauthorizing the emergency unemployment insurance program. But I, first of all, listened to my friend and colleague from Iowa, Senator GRASSLEY, talk about taxes. I did not hear

the whole speech, but I heard him say raising taxes never reduces the deficit or reduces the debt. I do not know which he said—either the debt or the deficit.

Well, I hate to disagree with my friend, but in 1993, when we enacted the Clinton economic proposal, it included increasing taxes in 1993. Oh, I remember the Senator from Texas, Mr. Phil Gramm, an economist, got up and said: Oh, this is going to cause a depression. This will be the worst thing that ever happened to this country. We are going to rue the day we ever did this. Well, we passed it. Of course, it did not get one Republican vote, and we did raise some taxes in 1993.

What happened, then, for the next 7, 8 years? We had unprecedented growth in this country. Quite frankly, we did balance the budget by 2000. Not only did we balance it, we had a surplus, and we had a surplus going into 2001. That is when George Bush came to the Presidency and said: Oh, we have this big surplus. Alan Greenspan was warning us we had too much of a surplus and it might not be wise to pay down the debt. We were on course to pay down the national debt. Then the Bush administration pushed through some tax cuts, for which they said: Oh, we are just going to do it temporarily, you see, just until 2010. We will keep them until 2010, and then we will have to revisit it or we will go back to what we had before in 2001.

They made that deal. I did not vote for it. I did not think we should cut taxes that time. I thought we should pay off the national debt. That would have strengthened our economy more than anything. But, no, the Bush administration, the Republicans who controlled the House and the Senate, said they wanted to cut the taxes. Most of the taxes that were cut, as my friend from New York said, were for the very wealthy.

What happened? Did we have a lot of job growth? Not a bit. Not a bit. Not only did we not get job growth, the deficit skyrocketed. So I do not want to hear any exhortations from that side of the aisle about how raising taxes has never reduced the deficit or the debt. We did under Bill Clinton. The proof is there. We had a surplus. But they wanted the tax breaks to give to the wealthy.

Lastly, my friend from New York talked about being held hostage. There has been a lot of talk about middle-income Americans getting a tax break. But I ask—and I keep asking—who are middle-income Americans? Who are they? Well, I keep hearing it is those earning \$250,000 a year or below. Mr. President, \$250,000 a year? My friends, if you are making \$250,000 a year, you are in the top 5 percent of the income earners in America. That is right. If you make \$250,000 a year, 95 percent of the American people make less than you do. So is that middle class? I do not think so.

To me, in the middle class are people who are making \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000,

\$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000, \$90,000 a year. That is the broad middle class of America. A lot of people in America are living on \$40,000 a year. It might be hard for some people to think about that, but that is true. They do not take fancy trips. They do not have fancy cars. They do not go to fancy restaurants. They do not wear suits and ties every day. But they are working, and a lot of them are working at jobs that are important to our society.

They may be nurses aides. They may be taking care of our elderly in a nursing home or in assisted living. They may be our childcare workers taking care of our children. They could be working in fast food places. They are making \$35,000, \$40,000, \$50,000 a year, and that is it. That is the middle class of America. What are we doing for them? What are we doing for that middle class?

So every time I hear about that \$250,000 is the middle class, I am thinking: Wait a second. You are talking about the top 5 percent in America. If you want to talk about the broad middle class, you have to start talking about people making less than \$100,000 a year. What are we doing for them?

Well, it seems to me, if we are going to have some tax breaks and stuff, we have to think about this group. In that group—in that group—of the broad middle class is the army of the unemployed. That is where the unemployed are. The unemployed are not on Wall Street. They got their bailouts. They are getting million-dollar bonuses this year, and my friends on the Republican side want to extend the tax breaks so not only do they get their million-dollar bonuses, they will not have to pay their fair share of taxes on them either, not to mention, for some of them, the way they are getting their money, they are being charged at the least possible tax rate—not as regular income but as capital gains. But I am not going to get into that right now.

So what are the Republicans doing? They are saying we cannot extend the unemployment benefits for the millions of Americans who are unemployed until and unless we have tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans. For those making over \$250,000, \$500,000, over \$1 million—they do not care; no matter what, no matter who you are, how much money you make—we have to give them tax breaks or we cannot extend unemployment benefits to the unemployed. You want to talk about hostages? The Republicans in this Congress are holding hostage the unemployed workers in America because they want to get the tax breaks for the wealthiest. That is what is happening here. I don't know that many of the American people know about that. Oh, they see us debate this stuff and back and forth about who is going to get these tax breaks, but right now unemployment benefits have run out. We have asked I think three or four times, if I am not mistaken, on the Senate floor for unanimous consent to extend